

# CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.924  
20 March 2003

ENGLISH

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## FINAL RECORD OF THE NINE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FOURTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,  
on Thursday, 20 March 2003, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Ms. Mary WHELAN (Ireland)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 924th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. I have the following speakers on my list for today's meeting: Turkey, Belgium, Japan, Bulgaria.

Before giving the floor to the first speaker on my list, however, I would like to make some opening remarks as Ireland assumes the presidency of the Conference.

It is indeed a privilege and responsibility to be the first Irish Chair of the Conference on Disarmament. I look forward to working with all delegations over the four working weeks of the session. I anticipate and appreciate the support which I will receive from the secretariat of the Conference.

As with all recent chairs, it would give me great satisfaction to contribute to the resolution of a dilemma which has confronted this organization for the best part of six years - that is, our inability to reach agreement on a work programme.

Today especially the relevance of this body must be seriously questioned if we continue by our inaction to act as if we have no role to play in advancing multilateral action on disarmament issues. Multilateralism demands not only a unity of purpose but a common commitment to finding solutions to specific difficulties and problems.

I will not rehearse the many efforts made by the very committed members of this Conference to address the specific difficulties and problems which we have faced. It did seem in 2001 that the then Amorim proposal could be acceptable to all members of the Conference on Disarmament. More recently, the group of five ambassadors - the Ambassadors of Algeria, Belgium, Colombia, Sweden and Chile - following intense consultations and discussions, put forward document CD/1693, which attempts in a holistic manner to develop a work programme that addresses the items on our agreed agenda. To date, over 40 delegations have indicated that they are favourably disposed to this proposal. I am not aware of any delegation having rejected it. I know that the five ambassadors are continuing to consult. I would urge delegations that have not yet expressed their views on CD/1693 to do so. It seems to me that greater transparency on positions would facilitate our work. It would, I believe, be helpful if the five ambassadors could report back to the Conference, perhaps following our break, perhaps in May, on their consultations and provide an assessment of the prospects for their proposals.

If there are delegations who have difficulties with the proposals set out in CD/1693 I would ask them to give real consideration to what type of proposal - if any - would have a greater prospect of securing the consensus necessary to enable this body to begin substantive work. There is an onus on all of us to find solutions which will not only meet our own concerns but which will also command a consensus in this body and take into account the concerns of others.

The first chair of this year's session of the Conference on Disarmament - the distinguished Ambassador of India - urged us to think outside the box. This seemed to find a resonance amongst a number of delegations. There were suggestions on new areas where the Conference might undertake work. I would urge delegations that have supported this approach

(The President)

to develop their thinking over the coming weeks. In doing so, they may wish to consider whether there are issues which, first, would respect the unique mandate of this body; second, would accord with our agreed agenda; and, third, would be of likely interest to the Conference as a whole. I would urge them to put their ideas in writing if they can, so that we can engage our capitals in a consideration of a new approach. In other words, I want people really to start thinking about if not what is now on the table, what can be on the table that would actually get the support of every delegation here.

There is one further issue which I would like to raise with you, and that is the participation of civil society in our deliberations. This Conference reflects the working patterns of a different era in its relations with the non-governmental organizations. This is at variance with the role which the representatives of civil society play in other areas of international life. It also fails to take account of the very positive contribution which non-governmental organizations make to our work in Geneva, most notably through the organization of seminars and workshops.

We know that this is not a new issue in the Conference on Disarmament. But it is perhaps an area in which delegations can show some small degree of flexibility. I have no proposals to make. Instead, I would like if, in this context, regional coordinators could consult with their groups to assess whether there is a willingness to take any step, however modest, in this area. Delegations will want time to consider this matter, and I would intend to revert to it in May, having heard the views of groups by then.

I am available at all times to all delegations who feel that they can use my good offices to move our work forward. I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you.

I would now like to give the floor to the first speaker on our list today, Mr. Murat Esenli from Turkey.

Mr. ESENLI (Turkey): Madam President, since this is the first time I am taking the floor, allow me to extend my warmest congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I assure you of the full cooperation and support of my delegation. My delegation also conveys its thanks to Ambassador Djismun Kasri of Indonesia for his valuable efforts to move our work forward.

In view of the human sufferings and casualties caused by anti-personnel landmines, the international community has long been endeavouring to take effective measures in order to prevent their use. The international efforts to rid the world of this scourge were strengthened by the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention on 1 March 1999. The security situation around Turkey precluded it from signing the Convention at the time of its conclusion. Nevertheless, as an expression of its commitment to the humanitarian objectives of the Convention, Turkey has acted in conformity with most of its articles. To give a few examples, all the landmines on the Turkish side of the border with Bulgaria have been cleared. In the same vein, Turkey has already cleared 10,875 mines along its other borders. Turkey has also been extending technical and financial assistance to international mine-clearance activities. Furthermore, Turkey has been nationally active in the education and rehabilitation aspects of anti-personnel landmines.

(Mr. Esenli, Turkey)

Turkey, as an observer at the first meeting of States parties to the Convention in Maputo in May 1999, announced its intention to become a party to the Convention during the first decade of the new millennium. As it may be recalled, on 27 February of this year I had the honour of informing the Conference on Disarmament that the Ottawa Convention had been resubmitted for accession to the Turkish Grand National Assembly by the new Government and that the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Turkish Parliament had endorsed the Convention and conveyed it to the General Assembly for final approval.

I am happy to report to the Conference that, on 12 March 2003, the Turkish Parliament unanimously adopted Law No. 4824, which contains the Ottawa Convention. At this juncture, I would like to express my delegation's appreciation to Ambassador Lint of Belgium for his unwavering support throughout and his congratulatory message. In this regard I also wish to thank the ambassadors of Switzerland and Netherlands and the Austrian, Argentine and Finnish delegations, as well as the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, for sharing our joy over this significant development.

We sincerely hope that with Turkey's accession to the Ottawa Convention the efforts aimed at demining our region in particular, and the world in general, will gain new impetus and vigour.

The PRESIDENT: I would like to thank the representative of Turkey and give the floor to Ambassador Jean Lint of Belgium.

Mr. LINT (Belgium) (translated from French): Madame President, I should like to start by congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I should also like to assure you of Belgium's full cooperation in your endeavours to help the Conference rapidly reach a compromise on a work programme which would enable our work once again to move forward. I have also noted your wish that the five ambassadors submit to the Conference at the beginning of the second session this year a summary of their consultations.

I was happy to hear the important statement by our Turkish colleague. I should like, in particular, to congratulate the members of the Turkish parliament, who unanimously adopted the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines, and I urge the Turkish authorities to finalize the accession procedure, so that Turkey can swiftly deposit its instrument of accession and do so at the same time as Greece, pursuant to the commitment announced here in this same body.

We would also greatly appreciate it if their instruments could be deposited with the United Nations Secretary-General simultaneously and before the end of this month. Greece and Turkey would thus be in a position, at the meeting of States parties to be held in Bangkok in September 2003, to join the new member States, namely, Afghanistan, Angola, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Comoros, Cyprus, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Gambia and Suriname.

(Mr. Lint, Belgium)

Notwithstanding the troubled times in which we live, I am confident that the States parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines will respect their commitments and, first and foremost, those to be found in article 1 of the Convention.

It is for this reason that, as Chair of the fourth meeting of States parties, I am solemnly appealing to all those States which are still outside the Convention to abide, in any conflict in which they may find themselves, by the international standards set up by the Convention and to refrain from using anti-personnel landmines, given the devastating humanitarian effects which these inhuman weapons have on innocent civilian populations long after the end of hostilities.

I should like to take this opportunity to encourage all States which are not yet party to the Convention to ratify it or to accede to it as soon as possible.

The PRESIDENT: I would like to thank the representative of Belgium and give the floor to Ambassador Kuniko Inoguchi of Japan.

Ms. INOUCHI (Japan): Madam President, I have asked for the floor today to make a short announcement, but at the outset allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency. I would like to assure you of the full support of my delegation as you guide us through this very difficult period.

I have asked for the floor to inform the Conference that Japan, Australia and the United Nations Institute of Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) will co-organize a workshop on promoting verification in multilateral arms control treaties - future verification regime, FMCT in particular, on 28 March in the Council Chamber. The workshop constitutes an important part of Japan's efforts to engage in substantive discussions on the priority issues of disarmament and arms control. My delegation has already issued invitations to all delegations concerned. If anybody in this room has not yet seen the invitation, please contact my delegation. We have some copies available here also.

The objective of this workshop will be to learn generic lessons from existing verification regimes in multilateral disarmament conventions and to discuss whether and how those lessons can be drawn upon in the creation of new verification regimes, including that of an FMCT.

The morning session will be devoted to discussions on generic lessons from the existing regimes, with Dr. Patricia Lewis as moderator. Presentations will be given by officials from IAEA, OPCW and the CTBTO Preparatory Committee, in addition to a general overview by Dr. Trevor Findlay, Executive Director of VERTIC, a well-known non-governmental organization dealing with verification issues.

The afternoon session will focus on verification of the FMCT. Participants will hear presentations by panellists from different countries, namely Australia, India, Sweden and the United Kingdom. A general overview will be presented by Mr. Hiroyoshi Kurihara, Senior Executive Director of the Nuclear Material Control Centre of Japan, who will moderate the session.

(Ms. Inoguchi, Japan)

In structuring the programme, the co-organizers have greatly benefited from discussions at plenary meetings of the Conference on Disarmament, as well as informal discussions held on various occasions, including seminars and workshops. I would like to express my appreciation for past efforts made by all those who contributed to the previous discussions and the organizers of various seminars. I hope all interested delegations will take this opportunity to learn about verification-related issues and to participate actively in these very informal discussions.

The PRESIDENT: I would like to thank the Ambassador of Japan, and I give the floor now to the Ambassador of Bulgaria, Ambassador Dimitar Tzantchev.

Mr. TZANTCHEV (Bulgaria): Madam President, at the outset, please allow me to extend my warmest congratulations and personal satisfaction on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. Let me also extend my appreciation to your predecessors in the presidency, the distinguished ambassadors of India and Indonesia for their efforts. I am fully confident that under your wise guidance and determination the Conference on Disarmament has as good a chance as any to overcome its present deadlock and meet the responsibilities entrusted to it by the international community as the sole forum for negotiating international arms control and disarmament treaties. At this important juncture, let me assure you that, in carrying out your term of service, you can count on my delegation's continued cooperation and support.

Indeed, we often say that the Conference on Disarmament has the primary role in the negotiation of multilateral agreements in the field of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. Since its establishment by the first special session on disarmament, of the United Nations General Assembly, the Conference on Disarmament has proved that it is capable of producing valuable arms control and disarmament agreements when Member States have the political will. Since 1999, however, the Conference has been unable effectively to launch any substantive work. My delegation fully shares the feelings of frustration expressed by many delegations at the lack of any breakthrough in its prolonged impasse. We regret that various valuable efforts to resolve the present deadlock in the Conference have not been successful.

Against this background, I would like to add today my delegation's voice to those delegations that have expressed their full support for the cross-regional group initiative of Ambassadors Dembri, Lint, Reyes, Salander and Vega. Building on their good faith, professionalism, collective wisdom and considerable experience, the five ambassadors presented at the beginning of this year an initiative, which is a ready-to-be-used tool, provided that there is sufficient political will to do so. We highly appreciate the flexibility of this initiative, its evolving character, since it is open to new ideas, as well as its timely official formalization. We support the five ambassadors' proposal and are ready to begin immediately its implementation.

This delegation believes that if we are really sincere in our willingness to endow this body with the authority to exercise the leadership which is its due in disarmament affairs and to make it an effective negotiating structure then the five ambassadors' initiative gives us a good opportunity to pursue that goal.

(Mr. Tzantchev, Bulgaria)

I would also like to join Ambassador Jean Lint of Belgium in congratulating the Turkish delegation on the unanimous adoption by the Turkish Parliament of the Ottawa Convention.

At the Second Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons in December 2001 the States parties took the important step of amending article 1 of the Convention, thus extending its scope of application to non-international armed conflicts. Bulgaria welcomes this important step, which addresses a vital humanitarian need, since non-international conflicts account today for the majority of the armed conflicts in general.

Today I am pleased to announce that, on 22 January this year, Bulgaria ratified the amendment to article 1 and deposited the instrument of ratification on 28 February in New York. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate those States parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons that have already ratified this amendment and I would like to urge all other States parties to undertake the necessary steps to adhere to amended article 1 as soon as possible.

The PRESIDENT: I would like to thank the Ambassador of Bulgaria for his statement. I have one more speaker on my list this morning. The Ambassador of Egypt has the floor.

Ms. GABR (Egypt) (translated from Arabic): Madam President, the delegation of Egypt agrees with you about the importance of strengthening international disarmament efforts within the framework of the United Nations. I should like to assure you that my delegation will do everything in its power to support your endeavours in that regard. I also endorse your view of the need for stronger cooperation and dialogue with the members of civil society.

Today, we are faced with exceptional circumstances that require the members of this Conference to assume larger responsibilities for the maintenance of international security and stability, particularly with regard to adherence to international law and the framework of the United Nations as the sole forum in which disarmament and inspection issues ought to be addressed. We must make sure that the disarmament process precludes the resort to the use of force or weapons, since that option would undermine its credibility and render it meaningless. The use of force would only lead to greater instability in international relations, the deaths of innocent people, and further violence. We members of this important international forum have a duty, therefore, to reaffirm the importance of pursuing disarmament within the framework of the agencies, mechanisms and resolutions of the United Nations.

I am sure that you will all have followed the various stages of the international community's handling of the problem of Iraq, which the leadership and people of Egypt have been anxious to see continue under United Nations auspices. You will also be aware of the outcomes of individual and regional multilateral efforts to reach a peaceful settlement, including those of the recent meetings of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the Arab Summit held in Egypt, and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, all of which stressed the need for solidarity and joint action to deal with this issue in an objective and transparent manner and in accordance with the precepts of international law enshrined in the relevant Security Council resolutions.

(Ms. Gabr, Egypt)

All the requisite resources and an appropriate time frame should have been provided so that the verification process could have been completed in accordance with the terms of Security Council resolution 1284 (1999) and 1441 (2002), and in an atmosphere of impartiality that would have allowed the United Nations effectively to discharge the tasks entrusted to it under those same resolutions, within the framework of peaceful, joint international efforts to ensure Iraq's compliance with its obligations.

We believe, as the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt stated in his address to the Egyptian people yesterday, that the verification of Iraq's capacities with respect to weapons of mass destruction forms an integral part of international efforts to establish a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, including Israel, in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 14 of Security Council resolution 687 (1991) and the other resolutions pertaining to the region which the United Nations adopts every year. It is regrettable that international follow-up has failed to ensure effective compliance with those resolutions, except as far as Iraq is concerned. This raises the question of whether a biased and discriminatory policy of double standards is being applied to disarmament issues.

We should also like to reaffirm the need for Middle East issues to be addressed within a comprehensive framework that does not focus on one issue to the exclusion of others, but through which strong international pressure may be brought to bear to resolve those issues including, in particular, the Palestinian issue. The Palestinian issue remains a top priority for the Middle East region and is a matter of great concern among Arab and international public opinion in view of the failure to reach a settlement that will put an end to the ongoing shedding of innocent blood.

The PRESIDENT: I would like to thank the Ambassador of Egypt. Is there any other delegation looking for the floor? That does not seem to be the case. I would also like to thank all this morning's speakers for the kind words to me personally.

As you are aware, and in accordance with the decision contained in document CD/1036, the Conference shall hold two plenary meetings, in the last week of the first part of its annual session. In this connection, I have been told by the secretariat that, at this stage, there are no speakers for next week. I would therefore like to propose that only one plenary meeting be scheduled, that is, on Thursday, 27 March 2003. If I do not hear any views to the contrary, the next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held next Thursday in this conference room.

That concludes our business for this meeting.

The meeting rose at 10.45 a.m.